



Apocalypse How: Baptist Movements During the English Revolution

Mark R. Bell

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A study of the relation of religion and political thought during the English Revolution, Mark R. Bell's Apocalypse How? challenges earlier historical claims that early Baptists "hardly had any political opinions at all". This reexamination demonstrates that Baptists were close to the secular radicals who became known as the Levellers and to the more religious revolutionaries known as the Fifth Monarchists. The reintegration of the religious and political aspects of their thought reveals Baptists as a movement capable of generating support for both radical groups. In clear and lively prose, Bell discusses the transformation of Baptists from an aggressively critical sect to one more accommodating to its larger culture. This development is identified with two changes in Baptist views of the end time. The first of these was an overall decline in eschatological enthusiasm during the 1640s, while the second was the way apocalyptic language among Baptists gradually came to refer more to endorsing society than to transforming it. This engaging study is a solid contribution to the historiography of the earliest Baptists.



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